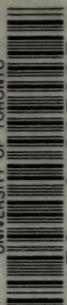


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McCully, Laura Elizabeth
Bird of Dawn

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**Bird of Dawn
and Other Lyrics**

BY
LAURA ELIZABETH McCULLY

June 1 - 1922 -

Mrs. Hinds,

Compliments

- Author.

1897

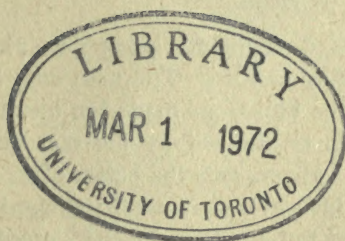
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~~Laura Elizabeth McCully~~
Laura Elizabeth McCully

Dedicated to My Mother

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Prefatory Note

The work included herein has been done under difficulties. It is the grist of the years from the publication of "Mary Magdalene and Other Poems," in 1914, until now. Some of the friends who inspired my work are dead,—grief has knocked at the door. Sam Wood, naturalist, has gone along. Emmanuel Tasse, of Ottawa, whose wife composed and brought out our war song, died the following year. "The Bridge of Gold" was written for him whilst he was still with us. Of our boys who went to the war some of the dearest and best are dead or missing.

My thanks to Dr. Watson for his nature poetry, which suggested my title piece, "The Bird of Dawn." He made the first copy on his own typewriter in red letter. Again, to John Garvin, of "Canadian Poets" fame, that unwearying philanthropist to every one of us, genius or scribbler, a very personal feeling of kindness because of his tactful effort to find me work when I was poor and dejected.

Now for my own experiences. Our Toronto Health Department assures the public with hearty good-will that open cess-pools and stagnant swamps are all right if we do not go out and actually "tag" them. So the city Roads Department left one for several seasons in front of my house, and charged me \$75.00 more per year taxes for local improvements from that day forward. Later on, when I had lost about fifteen pounds weight, my physicians diagnosed variously. My ideas had become lurid, incidentally. Some opined that my whole career had shown a defective mind; others said I was nervous. One man most unfortunately read my book and decided I had "putries," or something spelled like that.

The edition of the department's pamphlet lying before me tells what little harm a swamp can do. The man who had it in his front yard moved away, as the bull frogs made too much noise, and he had either to swim or to go in and out by the rear entrance. Now, the delicatessen lady who, I allege, gets the better of us when we both forget to count (fresh evidence!), pretends to recognize "fever-an-ager" (I spell as recommended to Canadians by the Toronto World), but this may be to encourage me to buy more pop and buns than I ought.

On account of all this I spent some time at the public expense three years ago in a hospital (euphemism!) especially designed for

those not able to escape medical attention. How the daughter of the Philistine rejoiced! And the local authorities, on strike for a raise in pay, pointed the finger of scorn at the untimely fate of agitators with degrees.

As a matter of fact, worse things than "fever-an-ager" rage where there is no influence and plenty of work, but little food or coal. "Live horse and you'll get oats"—and I have!

Some of our local aristocracy, who get a precarious living out of making soaps, magazines, safe title-deeds and helpless infancy, I shall let in on this booklet for nothing, with heartiest wishes for a happy New Year. Without are those who do not read, even if they buy; and whosoever loveth and maketh an opprobrious epithet. Likewise the newly vaccinated, the ferocious vaccinator with his list of slain—the epidemic rages—and the nice young girl who has spent her money on a Royal spread fan. "Tag," Toronto!

Toronto, December 12th, 1919.



BIRD OF DAWN

Oh, Oriole, thou bird of dawn,
While yet the dew is on the lawn,
And drowsy through her kindling East
Leans the rose morn with glowing breast.
Oh, bird of flame, oh, child of light,
I waken to a strange delight;
Listen and wonder, while I hear
Thy clarionet so piping clear.
And all the dewy valley rings
To a gold throat that sings and sings.

Oh, merry fellow, flute to cello,
Echoing mellow, mellow, mellow,
Tones that thrill from hill to hollow,
Rippling trills that lightly follow
Notes pure golden, molten, molden,
From some elfin horn of olden.
Charmed to make thy throat's delight.
Voice enchanted, breast of light,
Return, the dew is on the lawn.
Sing on, sing on, thou bird of dawn.

GOOD-BYE

Good-bye, little birch canoe,
Sad am I, parting from you.
Your paddles of maple lie split on the sand;
How light and how strong they felt in my hand,
When the summer was young and together we flew,
Quivering, swift, like a bird in the blue—
Good-bye, little birch canoe!

Good-bye, little birch canoe,
Fair weather, long summers to you.
Afloat on a lake that ripples with laughter,
Down dapple-gold paths the setting sun after,
Or gliding at night, so silent along
To the tune of a sigh that's breathed through a song.
Oh, thus have I drifted full often in you—
Good-bye, little birch canoe.

Good-bye, little birch canoe,
Sweet memories have I of you:
Many a day when I sit in the shadow
Again in my dreams I shall play renegado.
Drive light as a skater just skimming the water,
With a swish and a splash and a delicate patter,
And long as I live not another like you
To me, little birch canoe!

THE BRIDGE OF GOLD

(Written for the late Emmanuel Tasse, of Ottawa)

I sing the golden link that links the whole,
The arch of light that spans the unfathomed deep,
For life's but a gossamer thread from sleep to sleep,
But love's a bridge of gold from soul to soul.

Blessed be builders of the magic span,
Blessed be spendthrifts of the heart's own gold;
For neither time nor death have power to hold
The winged Immortal, mighty in the man.

CANADIAN JUNE

Oh, come away in dreams while June is young,
While still the scent of lilacs haunts the dusk;
Backward the press of strife and folly flung,
Thieves of the corn and harpies of the husk
Be all forgot; and in some elfin clime
Pluck, while the moon is bright, the rose of time!

Oh, come away in memory! By a wall
At garden's end the loaded lilacs grew,
Cloudy with mist the air, and scarce at all
The little dewy stars might venture through.
You tiptoed where a moonbeam gave you light,
And we two laughed to share our spoil that night.

Oh, come away in dreams where lingers youth,
By hawthorn dens beyond the daisied plain,
And we shall find enchantments all be truth,
Drunk with the mead of honey-dew and rain,
Rebuilding in the moon and perfumed night
The half-forgotten house of our delight.

THE NEW BODY

I was a tree that in the forest grew,
Full-foliaged, tall and good.
The more for this a fire the wind upblew,
Battered upon my wood.

Now I am ashes blown about the waste,
Or moving motes that in the ray aspire;
Pity me not, a spirit blanched and chaste,
For a time I, too, was fire.

I was a man who smiled and stood alone,
Whom strong floods might not move.
The more for this my soul was bowed and blown,
Beaten upon by love.

Now am I light as moths the light wind swings;
Now am I spirit, memory and desire.
Pity me not, reach up and touch my wings;
Draw near, my hearth has fire.

SOLDIER'S LOVE

Now while the fight is bitterest and long
I will not think on thee;
I bid my heart endure, my arm be strong,
Call on my God and let the issue be.
Yet comes the grievous striving to a close,
And all days end, and when the day is done
Deep in my heart a thought blooms like a rose:
I met and knew thee underneath the sun.

The chance of war that sets us two apart
I question now no more,
I know not if my love lives in thy heart,
But battle bowed, my cause I still adore.
And straining on, for worthiness and faith,
I cannot deem but that reward awaits;
Yea, though I take it from the hand of Death,
I know Love stands beside the eternal gates!

VOICES OF SPRING

Wind of the woods and streams,
Wind of the seas that are sweet,
All day long you come with dreams,
Bold through the city street.

Oh, I would be beneath the pines where small hepaticas are born,
Under my mocassins the spines, before my face a trail forlorn.
Yet never lonely, never lost, by tiny silent feet recrossed,
And through the haunted vistas far by night the pale, fair northern star,
By night the couch blue Cobalt roofed upon the breast my fathers loved.

Wave of the breaking blue
Spilt on a sounding shore,
Spring hath lifted a thrall from you
And the sirens call once more.

To us who from men's ways would break, from busy cares and barren
ends,
To watch the long, smooth-heaving wake, to skim the islets' hidden
bends;
The silver veil o'er beauty drawn, the massy shadows of the dawn
That lift to show the shore, the sky, in rainbow-hued translucency.

Sigh of the shifting pine
Through the silent shuttles of rain,
And a voice arouses, a hope is mine,
That the world is born again!

Abroad the breath of life is blown, and far, far up the phalanx flies,
I hear the calling of mine own, a thousand murmuring voices rise
As they would flood the city street, with gusty winds and waters sweet;
I hear a tripping in the gloom of every April-haunted room;
The black wing takes the northern sky—to-morrow outward-bound
am I.

HAPPY WARRIORS

(On the eve of St. Julien)

What shall we say of the Cross

That lifts men up?

Is it all a crime of blood and waste and loss

Drained to the dregs of the cup?

With the hordes of hell let loose on earth to prey,

With sins unspeakable climbed at last to the day;

Is this all we have to say of the Cross? Nay, nay.

For it lifts men up.

And under its shadows is Virtue brought forth to-day;

And the bitterest dregs in its cup

Shall all be forgotten to-morrow and past away

When friend meets friend in the happy dawn, and they cry:

"You, too, with the laurel of sacrifice, you and I,

"And all this famous company? Hands around,—

"We have shown the world the way, we have freed the bound,

And our Cross is set as a guide to all who pass by,

"Raised up on high."

PIONEERING

The wind in the leaves and the roar of the sea,
These are the sounds that are dearest to me;
The trail that is narrow, the way that is far,
And a bright light, a white light, the high north star.
Up from the furrow, out from the hall
The child of the wilderness comes at their call.

CROSS ROADS

At the cross roads a wooden Christ
Hung battered and awry, and black,
The carrion crows kept drifting back,
Unsated yet, to keep their tryst,
While the carved eyes looked down so mild
And the sad lips, unchanging, smiled.

Came a swift woman, babe in arm,
Who thought to catch her breath and pray,
But turned in fear at what there lay;
And crossed herself against such harm
At the cross roads where hung the Christ
And crows returned to keep their tryst.

How could he look so stilly down,
He who saw all his laws defamed,
Women defiled and children maimed,
And manhood with its pride o'erthrown?
Was it for this that centuries
Had passed before those carven eyes?

Lo! what he witnessed while he hung
There at the parting of the ways,
Man's pageant of self-love and praise
Each day re-born, forever young;
Man's tale of wrongs, told and re-told
Each day anew, forever old.

His shadow falls across the Crime,
It broods upon the sinner's soul,
And till the wounds of the world be whole
Shall darken every page of time.
Re-crucified, his sad eyes scan
The sick and maddened soul of man.

CANADIANS ALL!

Canadians all, God raise your hands;
By Langemarck, by Ypres won,
By those who look not on the sun,
Bright, bright your new-born honour stands!

And shall they be forgot, forgot?
While still against the unnumbered tide
By grace of God a few abide,
Theirs shall be history's golden spot.

Oh, to be man who fought that day,
That day of honour, purple hung,
Whose praise shall pass from tongue to tongue,
Retold for aye, retold for aye.

Our hearts were yours without a fee,
You were our own, the new world's hope,
Whom all their hordes might hardly cope,
Nor we have dreamed such gallantry.

Still at your names hot tears shall start,
And many a child shall hear the tale
How over all great deeds avail,
And yours who chose the immortal part.

By Langemarck, by Ypres won,
A valiant, silent host lay claim
To one great standard red as flame,
Canada's honour in the sun!

WILL THE LINES HOLD

They make them guns of might,
Devise foul poisons scorned of honest fight,
Batter the crowded town and shell the sick,
And o'er the carnage battle-smoke hangs thick.
Whom shall we ask whether the lines will hold?

Yonder sits one intent on dividend,
How to gain more and less and less to spend:
Marked he if pots were full or fires were fanned?
Yet all he has must stand or fall by the might of the poor man's hand.
Go ask him, therefore, if the lines will hold.

Go ask of him who sent the false supplies;
He is not worse nor better than his mates.
Nay, ask us all—we built the house of lies,
We worship greed, we write our foul ideals in our states.
Whom shall we ask whether the lines will hold?

Let us go up and lift our hearts to God.
Pray him assoil our greed and spare the rod,
Giving us joy of noble deeds and worth,
So that His kingdom come and peace return upon the earth.
Come, let us ask of God will the lines hold?

THE OPEN DOOR

(Written for Dr. Jas. L. Hughes)

How many such there are I do not know,
But know the one I found,
And so I sound
My knock unhesitating when I go
As one who seeks a friend, nor waits without
In any sort of doubt.

I think the door that lets upon your heart
Was hung sans latch or bar,
But just ajar,
As playing hospitality's own part
That meets the guest half-way with jovial din,
And bids more music in.

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

We had made and hidden away such a safe, warm nest;
Oh, gallant lover of mine, oh, man of men,
We shall not find any such port or haven of rest
From the world storm again.

Where now are the wandering feet and errant heart?
By what far seas, in what desert places vast.
Surely the night will o'ertake us two apart,
And we be lost at the last.

Bitter the scourge of greed and the waste of war,
Sundering lovers and friends, but bitterer yet
Are the alien faces that crowd on thine, and the scar
That burns, lest I forget.

Then let it burn, let it blaze, since it must in a soul
Not born to the lust of gold or the lure of the eye;
Let it wax with the years and return as the seasons roll,
Like a god who will not die.

Fall down dull, leaden tears in the empty nest,
Lose count, oh heart, of the heavy nights and days,
But the lips that were laid to his sword be accounted blest,
Keeping the faith always.

THE LOVE OF GOD

After the weariness and wars of day

Cometh the shade of wings, the hovering night,
With soft wind whisperings and moonlight grey,

Or many-starred and bright.

Such is the love of God unto the soul,
Restoring quietness and making whole.

For if a man be burdened with much care,

Or if he miss the mark of heart's desire,
Let him not for this little march despair;

Like a home hearth with hospitable fire
Beckons the shelter of his father's breast,
And whence he came, he goeth, finding rest.

TO A GOOD FRIEND

When I remember how we two are friends
My heart is filled with comfort and content;
In this my searching was not vainly spent,
And life for many stripes has made amends.
Not for to-day our help and kindness is,
Not for a year, nor for the mortal span,
Time cannot end this good that time began;
Thus in the scale is grief outweighed by bliss.
Oh fortunate to draw twin pearls unspoiled
Wan from the wilful waters of men's war;
Oh blest, the world, the flesh, the devil foiled,
To bind them on our brows forevermore,
The while our souls from petty cares assoiled
Raise up their heads immortal, seeing far!

LOVE'S OWN EYES

Down all the ways of youth is song
And April joys were sweet, boy;
The winding ways of spring along
All lightly went our feet, boy.

The winding ways, the ways along,
My heart shall not forget your song,
And memory keeps when summer dies,
The light of love's own eyes, boy,
The light of love's own eyes.

The golden oriole shall fling
With mellow trill again, boy,
To sapphire skies his glowing wing
And call his mate in vain, boy.

The winding woodland way she goes
Has seen the withering of the rose,
But true hearts keep when all else dies,
The light of love's own eyes, boy,
The light of love's own eyes.

Then through the clang of war's alarms,
And half a world away, boy,
Our hearts shall know no dread of harm,
All unforgetting they, boy.

The winding ways, the ways along,
There echoes still the April song,
There gleams the light that never dies,
The light of love's own eyes, boy,
The light of love's own eyes.

ORPHEUS IN SUMMER

When the birds sing each dawn and glowing day
Follows on glowing day, when dumb with heat
The drowsy trees along the windless way
Are sweet as roses overblown are sweet.
To the warm waves that curl along the coast
I lay my heart and say my litany,
Thy name, my soul, even thine, fared forth and lost,
Long years, and shadow bound, and passed from thought of
love and me.

I sing the joy of summer. Let the tall
Dream lilies blaze their white and sweeten noon.
So mellow are my cords of gold, their call
Wakens the honey bee from happy swoon
His love to leave. But will the Shades uncloset
For notes that woo the wild gull from the sea?
Will the old earth yield up that premier rose,
That fair and tender thing that was my mate, Eurydice?

I who might bid all creatures bow their heads,
Heavy with grief at one great plaintive note,
I would not scare the ring-dove where she spreads
Her tinted wing, nor still a single throat
Of summer's ecstasy. My lute I kiss,
Remembering lyric lips once lightly curled,
Then from its chords I call our ancient bliss
And sound the soul of joy across the stirred and wondering world.

DEAR NATIVE LAND

Why do we love thee so, dear native land?
Stern nurse and mother thou;
Thy suns our hardy childhood scorched and tanned,
Icy thy winter kiss upon the brow.
Wrung from the wood and waste our bread, and yet
We who have known thy love shall not forget.

Why do we love thee so, dear native land,
Cold as a Sabine bride?
Scarce might our father's manhood ope thy hand,
Conquer thy treasures and subdue thy pride.
There is no better proof of a man than this—
That he should love and win and call thee his.

Why do we love thee so, dear native land?
Is it that thou art fair?
Is it thy summer woodlands softly fanned
By inland ocean's air?
Or is it that thy rugged pine-tree's sigh
Breathes to our hearts a life-long lullaby?

Yea, for my native land, God made thee fair
Beyond the poet's guess;
Unbidden tears upon the eyelids stand
Even to call to mind thy loveliness.
Thine autumn hills that rival sunset's glow,
Thy silver winter nights of moon and snow.

Sweetheart and mother, not for these alone
Goes out our love to thee,
But because thou art ours, our very own,
By sweat and sword won in fair field and free.
Oh Canada, God keep thy spotless fame,
And we a freeman's birthright in thy name.

MY LENTEN LADY

I have not seen my lady
For many a weary year,
But I would twine a Lenten wreath
To set upon her hair.
Her hair that's blowing in the wind,
The wind so wild and wet,
The throbbing, piercing wind of springs
My heart cannot forget.

I have not seen my lady
Down any of your ways,
But I would hymn her in my songs
So worthy of all praise.
Now when the lovely dead rise up
All in a springtime night,
And where the earth was brown there stand
Great lilies clothed in white.

I have not seen my lady
For fasting nor for prayer;
I look upon the rose, and lo!
Its glamour is not there.
No more I look without, within
Dwelleth a better grace,
Out of my darkened heart there blooms
The beauty of thy face.

TEARS

Once while yet a child I said,
Weep will I no more,
All my bitter tears be shed.
Let me pour forth all the store,
Weep, and weep no more.

All these years my heart was dry
With a settled bitterness;
I let all things pass me by,
Smiled at loss and braved distress,
Till upon the life within
Fell the shadow of a sin.

Now, oh Father, let me weep
Leaden, heavy tears,
Tears that sear their channels deep,
All the buried grief of years
Brought to light in tears.

A SERBIAN MOTHER

Light of my eyes that lay in my breast,
Oh, small, soft face turned towards the sky,
Of all dear children, thou the best,
Can we be parted, thou and I?
Why, all along God meant in you
A great, wise leader, kind and true!
And though you came but humble-wise,
No less I knew you, light of my eyes.
Oh, little son, the ground is red
Here where you played, the swine instead
Have trampled it, and you are dead.

I hate their helmets in the sun,
Marked you that striding fiend, whose steel—
Oh God, before my senses reel,
Take heed, of all men, curse that one!
Let him not die as brave men may,
But crumble slowly, day by day;
Let him be loathed, let every face
Turn from him fearfully. Be his place
Filled by the man he hated most.
Yea, by the Temple of the Ghost,
Body and soul, let him be lost!

Oh, light of my eyes, son of my breast,
Oh, small, soft body, warm by me,
Think of thy mother, thou at rest;
Pity her, who so pitied thee.
How could'st thou, sweet, in thy bright heaven
Forget her heart so anguish-riven,
And how when thou wast weak and small
Her arms to thee were all in all?
Oh, for her sake, from God demand
Vengeance on them, by sea, by land,
And thou shalt save us, as I planned.

GREY DAY

Grey day,
I love thy peace,
Motionless airs and brooding calm,
For in such silences alone it seems
That to my own tempestuous soul is held
A mirror wherein imaged dwells,
Dovelike, a soul
Serene.

* * *

A PRAYER

Oh God, keep pure my heart,
A clean, sweet room, that love may dwell therein,
And in such humbleness teach me my part,
Walking the lowly ways that Thou hast been,
That I at last grow gentle like to Thee,
So that no creature, howsoever mean,
That Thou hast made should turn away from me.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

What joybells can we sound across the snow
To wake a heart grief-bound, and lift the eyes
Heavy with tears and dull with ancient woe,
Repeated sorrow of the centuries,
Called by the name of war? We hang on high
A cross vicarious, and we bid men gaze
Into the cradle of his earliest days,
While still and cold in Flanders earth there lies
A dearer sacrifice.

To those who know at heart no joy or peace,
Whose sad, precarious path henceforth must wend
By lonely ways, let Honor bear heartsease,
Swift-footed with bright blossoms in her hand,
Opening every door and bidding home
Each empty memory that seeks to rove,
Warmed at a nation's heart, no more to roam,
Comforted with our love.

MY CODICIL

Because my youth was spent in studious ways,
And all the gay sun-lovers passed me by;
While vexing cares absorbed maturer days
So breathless driven, I scarce reasoned why.
To all things young I make my plaint and cry,
To all that beauty which I loved to praise.
Lay me where summer winds and petals fly,
Let round-eyed children come with wondering gaze,
And girls with flower faces call and play
Above and round me all a summer's day.

Build me a little place of native stone,
With steps for lovers when the moon is high;
There where the bluff looks o'er the blue, alone
Save for the living, let me living lie,
For I shall sing your love and breathe your sigh
Whilst yet the lyric winds and trees intone.
And if my heart were dust it would be stirred
To hear again the immortal, whispered word,
And my pulse rise in ashes at the breath
Of glorious deeds and thoughts more permanent than death.

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